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ADVANCES IN MATHEMATICS 73, 263–264 (1989)

Book Reviews

G. PREUSS, *Theory of Topological Structures*, Reidel, 1988, 304 pp.

We thought that the generalization of the notion of space had ended with *topoi*, but we were mistaken. The more time goes on, the less we know what space really is. Maybe space is the most generally consistent "thing" in which certain constructions can be carried out. But what is a "thing"? Read this book and you may find out.

J. P. ROMANO AND A. F. SIEGEL, *Counterexamples in Probability and Statistics*, Wadsworth and Brooks/Cole, 1986, 303 pp.

A new way of learning a subject is suggested by this book: through counterexamples. Many theorems of mathematics are really just hygienic prescriptions, meant to guard us against unpleasant complications of which we are not yet aware. Unfortunately, authors frequently forget to give any hint of what these complications are, thereby rendering their exposition incomprehensible. This misunderstanding is particularly frequent in commutative algebra, where theorems sounding like "All extremely regular rings are fully normal," are proved in the full wealth of mysterious detail and naively followed by useless examples of extremely regular and of fully normal rings. Such authors, suffering from serious attacks of *déformation professionnelle*, fail to realize that hygienic theorems can only be understood by giving examples of rings that are *not* extremely regular, and *not* fully normal. Probabilists are closer to reality, and we may expect them to deliver a better exposition, as this book in fact does.

Séminaire Bourbaki, Volume 1986/87, exposés 669–685, 344 pp. *Elie Cartan et les mathématiques d'aujourd'hui*, 441 pp., Société Mathématique de France, 1985 and 1987, respectively.

The French are remarkable for the stability of the institutions they have created over the centuries where the life of intellect can thrive: the Collège de France, the Grandes Ecoles, the Institut, and... the Séminaire Bourbaki. It is, among all organizations meant to keep mathematics together, the most successful, the most admired, and the most envied. *Vive la France*!

F. MORGAN, *Geometric Measure Theory, A Beginner's Guide*, Academic Press, 1988, 145 pp.

At last someone is telling how to get into the esoteric subject of geometric measure theory, which at one end has proofs hundreds of pages long and at the other end has beautiful

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experiments with soap bubbles. This introduction, the only readable one to date, will do much to promote the study of this fascinating field. We look forward to the author's next book for renewed reading pleasure.

I. E. HARVEY, *Dérrida and the Economy of Différence*, Indiana University Press, 1986, 285 pp.

Compared to deconstructionism, communism is Mickey Mouse. The world is changed by deep ideas concocted by improbable intellectuals, never by screaming crowds waving flags, and deconstruction may, just may, be one such idea.

GIAN-CARLO ROTA
EDITOR